

Do We Believe What We Read?

Effects of User-Generated Social Media Content on Consumers' Brand Liking

By

Emily Kohlmann

Abstract:

Social media is a relatively new form of marketing for companies, and its use continues to increase among consumers and companies. Past research has found that businesses use social media marketing primarily to increase brand awareness and communicate their brand online (Structuring a social media team, 2012). However, this existing research does not acknowledge the content on social media posted by users about their experiences with the brand. Companies need to understand how this user-generated content about their brand influences consumers' attitudes towards the brand. The present research examines the effect of consumers viewing negative social media content on consumer brand liking, and it addresses how social media usage frequency influences consumers' brand liking after viewing user-generated content. This study uses a survey scenario to present social media content and collects information about brand liking and social media usage. The regression analysis supported that viewing negative user-generated social media content decreases consumer liking for the brand, but it did not support that the degree of influence of the content varied by the participant's extent of social media usage.

Keywords: Social Media, Branding, User-Generated

Submitted under the faculty supervision of Professor Colleen Manchester, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Business degree, magna cum laude, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, Spring 2015.

1. Introduction

As more and more people open accounts on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, many companies have established their own presence on these sites in order to interact with consumers. Social media includes networking sites used to connect people, blogs, wikis, video sharing sites, web-based email services, virtual communities, and other web services (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media sites became popular with users around 2004, and the number of users has only increased since then. In 2010, there were about 0.97 billion users worldwide, and that grew to 1.79 billion users by 2014, showing 85% growth. It is projected that by 2018, social media users will reach 2.44 billion as mobile social media usage continues to grow (“Number of worldwide social network users,” 2015). These billions of users are exposed to content daily from other users and from companies with a social media presence. Some business-to-consumer (B2C) companies began forming their own pages or accounts on these sites soon after, and business-to-business (B2B) companies began using social media around 2010 (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011).

While social media marketing has become very common for brands, there are risks involved with using social media. Brands are exposed to a much wider audience, and consequently they are vulnerable to greater criticism. Companies often try to start social media campaigns that get people talking about their brand and result in people sharing the brand content with their social media network. For example, companies will create hashtags on twitter related to their brand and create advertising campaigns or promote the hashtag on Twitter to get people to tweet using the hashtag. If enough people use the hashtag, it can become a trending topic on twitter, and many users are exposed to the marketing. However, when people are generating their own content, the company has no control over what they write with the hashtag.

McDonald's has experienced negative exposure from a hashtag firsthand (Hill, 2012). In 2012, they started a Twitter campaign with the hashtag "#McDStories" to inspire Twitter users to tweet about heartwarming experiences they have had involving the fast food chain. This hashtag backfired, and people posted about the unhealthy image of the company instead. There was little McDonald's could do to stop the hashtag from being used and shared. This is one example of how social media campaigns can easily backfire to spread negative associations about a company's brand.

While negative content about a brand can easily spread on social media, how influential is it in shaping consumer's brand liking? This research focuses on two main research questions surrounding user-generated content about brands on social media and social media usage. Namely, this study investigates to what extent negative social media posts dilute consumers' beliefs about a brand. Furthermore, it evaluates whether the extent of brand dilution is greater for consumers who use social media more often.

While research has been conducted on social media marketing already, this thesis contributes by examining user-generated social media brand content and social media usage and how effective they are in influencing consumer attitudes towards brands. Data was collected using a survey with an experimental scenario situation to analyze the effect of viewing a negative or neutral social media post. The survey was distributed on Amazon Mechanical Turk. To analyze the results, several regression models were used. The results showed that viewing negative user-generated social media content about a brand decreases consumer liking for the brand, but it did not support that the degree of influence of the content is affected by how often the consumer uses social media.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 will discuss the current literature on branding, social media marketing, and trust. The third section will detail methodology including the hypotheses, data collection method, and method of analysis. Next, section 4 will describe the results, and section 5 will highlight the important findings and relevant implications from the results.

2. Literature Review

Research exists that examines the importance of branding and the prevalence of social media marketing. Current research also examines how social media can be used to enhance a brand's image and how word-of-mouth communications on social media influence branding. This section will outline the existing research on branding, social media as a branding tool, and the effect of social media usage on consumers. This section also discusses the gap in the research that this thesis seeks to fill.

2.1 Branding

According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is defined as a "name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers". Brand image refers to how people perceive the brand and their thoughts, feelings, and emotions about it (American Marketing Association Dictionary). Branding is important because brands are a key asset for a business, brands allow companies to launch new goods and services, brands affect a firm's financial outcomes and stock valuations, and brands allow a company to differentiate itself from competitors (A Strong Brand, 2005). Brand image is the associations and attitudes consumers have towards a brand. A positive brand image and awareness of the brand can make consumers more likely to think of the brand and want to

purchase it when choosing between several brands. Consumer's attitudes towards the brand are based on personal experiences with the good or service and information through communications from the company, media sources, or other consumers through word-of-mouth (Keller, 1993). This suggests that companies should be continuously looking for channels to create a positive brand image in order to add equity, drive sales, and differentiate themselves.

2.2 Social Media Marketing

Social media is increasingly becoming more important for businesses in today's digital world. Marketing departments and advertising agencies use advertisements on social media sites, create accounts or pages on social media sites that users can view, and share content on these sites that users can observe and interact with. According to a recent survey, 97 percent of businesses are using social media marketing, and 86 percent of marketers think social media is important to their business. The survey was taken by marketing professionals in companies of varying sizes, and about half of the companies represented were B2B and half were B2C (Stelzner, 2013). There are many reasons why marketing professionals and advertisers use social media marketing. Objectives include increasing web traffic, improving reputation, generating leads, and increasing sales. However, the largest percentage of marketers report that their organization's social media goal is to increase brand awareness ("Structuring a social media team," 2012).

Marketers are not the only ones contributing to the brand conversation on social media. Consumers also post content about brands and their experiences with them on social media, which is viewed by other social media users in their network. This consumer behavior is called "influence impressions," and it is the behavior that social media marketers desire (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Consumer-to-consumer interaction about brands on social media sites can be classified as

a form of word-of-mouth advertising. Consumers can share positive or negative information about a brand based on their feelings towards the brand or their experiences with the good or service associated with the brand. However, no research has answered how credible these social word-of-mouth brand communications are online.

2.3 Trust and Social Media Usage

Several studies have examined what sources of information are most trusted by consumers. A research study concluded that media content can affect consumers' attitudes towards a brand. After a brand crisis, public media images hurt brand trust more than the consumers' own experiences (Yannopoulou, Koronis, & Elliott, 2011). Narrowing the findings to social media, another study found that consumers who use a brand's Facebook page rated the brand higher than those who did not use the brand's Facebook page (Walsh, Clavio, & Blaszk, 2013). This supports that social media does impact a brand's image, and that users trust a brand's social media page as a legitimate information source about the brand. It has also been demonstrated that consumers view social media as a more trustworthy source of information about goods and services than traditional communication (Foux, 2006). These studies establish that consumers trust information on social media and that content generated by companies on social media can influence consumer's attitude towards the brand. However, current research fails to address whether consumers trust content generated by *other users* and if that content can ultimately change their view of the brand.

The degree to which people are influenced by user-generated social media content about brands likely depends on several factors. In general, it is reasonable to assume that the more often someone uses a source of information, the more they trust the source and the more influenced by it they are. Stepping back, heavier usage rates of social media have been

correlated to profitability for a firm. A recent study found that consumers who have high levels of activity on a firm's social media site visit the firm more often and are more profitable for the firm (Rishika, Kumar, & Bezawada, 2013). Whether or not heavy usage leads to higher profitability or if usage and profitability are merely outcomes of a third variable is unknown. Research has also linked social media usage to more favorable attitudes towards social media advertising (Kamal, Chu, & Pedram, 2013). Whether someone is a heavy or light user of social media predicts how trusting of social media ads and the degree to which they will be influenced by the ads. However, research has not examined whether the intensity of social media use affects how trusting users are towards *user-generated* social media content.

2.4 Filling the Gap

The connection between social media and branding has been widely supported in current research. It has been found that branding is the most popular objective for companies using social media marketing and that consumers can be influenced by social media advertising. However, an examination of whether user-generated social media content about brands can influence other users' attitudes towards a brand is missing. Additionally, how social media usage frequency affects the degree to which a consumer is influenced by user-generated content is not available in current research. This study examines if consumers attitudes towards a brand can be influenced by viewing social media content created by another consumer about the brand. It also looks at differences in attitude change between heavy and light users of social media.

Social media has been established as a viable tool for enhancing a company's brand image. This could be examined further to determine if companies should be concerned about what consumers are saying about their brand on social media. If user-generated content can have a widespread effect on how other users in their networks view a brand, companies would need to

consider taking action to respond to negative content and encourage positive content in order to protect their brand equity.

3. Methodology

To fill the gaps in the literature and determine if viewing social media content posted by other consumers can sway brand liking, this study proposed and tested two hypotheses. This section defines the hypotheses, discusses how data were collected and what variables were used, outlines the method of analysis, and examines the assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses to this approach.

3.1 Hypothesis Statements

Marketers value the use of social media for many reasons, but they likely value it most for branding. The most common organizational goal that marketing managers cite for social media is to increase brand awareness. These professionals believe that social media has an influence over how consumers view their brand (eMarketer, 2013). Negative social media content generated by other consumers can be classified as a form of word-of-mouth advertising because information about the brand is communicated by other consumers, not by the brand itself. Several studies have found that word-of-mouth advertising is more effective than traditional marketing. One study compared the lifetime value of a customer acquired through word-of-mouth advertising versus traditional advertising. Customers who heard about the company through word-of-mouth were two times more valuable over their lifetime than other customers (Villanueva, Yoo, & Hanssons, 2008). Another study discovered that referrals from word-of-mouth advertising have a longer carryover effect than traditional marketing (Trusov,

Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). These research findings suggest that those negative posts will be effective at influencing brand beliefs of other consumers, leading to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Brand liking is lower when a consumer views negative social media content as compared to neutral social media content.

If brand liking can be affected by viewing negative, user-generated social media content, then does the effect differ based on the consumer's frequency of social media use? Are brand attitudes less favorable after viewing negative social media content for heavy users of social media than light users? Research shows that social media usage is linked to more favorable attitudes towards social media advertising (Kamal, Chu, & Pedram, 2013). This same principle could be applied to user-generated content on social media as well in that people who use social media more often may be more receptive to social media content about brands. Therefore it is expected that viewing a negative post about a brand would affect these users' brand attitudes more than those who rarely use social media.

Hypothesis 2: The negative effect on brand liking of viewing negative social media content relative to neutral content is stronger for heavy users than for light users of social media.

3.2 Measures, Variables, and Data Collection

To collect data, this study used an experiment facilitated through a survey scenario. Participants were asked about their general feelings towards the Culligan brand, asked to read a

short description of the brand, and shown a social media post about Culligan. The survey measured brand liking, the dependent variable, and the frequency of social media usage, an independent variable. Control variables such as whether they used the brand before, age, gender, and location were also collected.

The Culligan brand was chosen for this study because its primary product, water, is low involvement and associated with utility rather than emotions (Verma, 2006). A non-emotional brand was selected to minimize variation in brand liking within the treatment and control group and allow for more accurate measurement of the variation between groups. If the brand was more emotional, there would likely be more variation in brand liking within the groups than could not be readily explained or controlled for in the study.

The sample consisted of people in the United States over the age of 18 who speak English. A total of 95 people completed the survey after it was posted as a HIT (Human Intelligence Task) on Amazon Mechanical Turk. The task was posted for 2 days in April. The sample was made up of 28 females (31%) and 62 males (69%). The average age was about 31 years old with a standard deviation of 10 years (see Appendix 3 for a distribution of the age of the participants). Eighty-one participants (90%) lived in the U.S., and nine lived internationally (10%).

The manipulation used in the scenario survey was which social media content was viewed. Participants were randomly assigned to the treatment or control group. Participants in the treatment group viewed negative social media content, and participants in the control group viewed neutral social media content (see Appendix 1). Both pictures incorporated the Culligan brand. The negative content was a real Facebook post that was posted on the Culligan Facebook page by a consumer. The neutral picture featured two men with neutral facial expressions and a

Culligan water cooler in the background. The survey randomly showed one of the two pictures so that each was viewed by half of the sample. A dummy variable was used to indicate if the negative content was viewed. The negative content was coded as 1, and the neutral content was coded as 0.

The second independent variable measured frequency of social media use. Participants were asked “How many days per week do you use social media?” Participants selected a response on a six point scale. Response options were 0 days, 1-2 days, 3-4 days, 5-6 days, once per day, and multiple times per day.

The survey also measured the dependent variable of brand liking. Participants rated the Culligan brand after viewing the social media content. Their attitude was measured using three questions. The first question asked participants how they would rate Culligan as a brand overall, and responses were on a seven point scale from very poor to excellent. The second question asked how likely they would be to recommend Culligan to a friend or colleague on a scale from 0-10 (not at all likely to extremely likely). Finally they were asked on a scale from 0-10 with 10 being their ideal water, how they would rate Culligan. Their responses to each of these questions were standardized such that a one unit change in standardized measure corresponds to a one standard deviation change in underlying scale.

The survey asked several demographic questions to be used as control variables in the analysis. Participants were asked to report their age and gender. They were also asked if they were located in the U.S. or internationally, and if they had previously used or bought Culligan products before.

3.3 Analysis

The study tested the hypotheses using two multivariate regression models. The first regression tested Hypothesis 1. It assessed whether brand liking is less when negative content is viewed. The regression analyzed the relationship between viewing a negative social media post and the degree to which the brand was viewed favorably. Hypothesis 1 implies a negative relationship between negative content and brand liking (i.e. $\beta_1 < 0$):

$$\text{Brand Liking} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Negative Content}) + \beta_2(\text{Usage}) + \varepsilon$$

The second regression tested hypothesis 2. It analyzed whether high users who view the negative social media content have less brand liking than low users who view the negative content. This regression takes into account a moderator variable (Negative x Usage) to measure whether the effect of viewing the negative content on brand liking differed by whether the respondent was a high user. Hypothesis 2 implies a negative relationship between the moderator variable and brand liking (i.e. $\beta_3 < 0$):

$$\text{Brand Liking} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Negative Content}) + \beta_2(\text{Usage}) + \beta_3(\text{Negative x Usage}) + \varepsilon$$

In the analysis, control variables were also included in the regression to test their effects. Variables for age, gender, prior brand experience, and location of the participant were included.

3.4 Strengths/Assumptions

When using multivariate regressions, several assumptions are made. The study assumed that there was a linear relationship, the dependent variables were normally distributed, there was

no multicollinearity between the independent variables, and there was homoscedasticity. It is also important to note that the regressions only show relationships, not causes and effects. This is relevant to the second hypothesis that relates brand liking and social media usage.

It was also assumed that the manipulation was effective. It was assumed that respondents correctly observed that the social media content they viewed was negative when they were shown the negative treatment, and similarly for the neutral treatment. This could be a limitation if participants perceived the tone of the content differently than the study had designed and intended. The next section discusses the results from the survey and assesses the limitation.

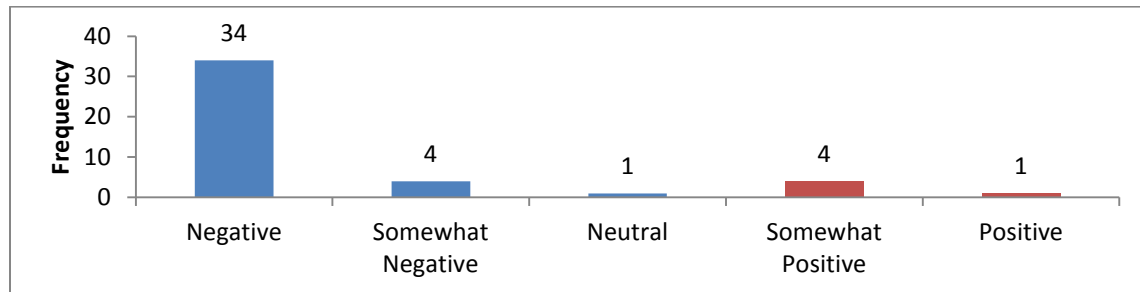
4. Results

4.1 Removing Outliers

Before analyzing the dataset, it was important to determine if participants understood key parts of the survey. Participants were instructed to read the social media content shown in the survey for 15 seconds. To address my research question, it was imperative that the participants viewed the content closely enough to perceive how the author of the social media content viewed the Culligan brand. To determine if the participants were attentive to this portion of the survey, they were asked, “Thinking about the post you just viewed, how would you rate the author’s opinion of Culligan based on his social media post?” Responses were on a five-point scale from negative to positive. While there is some room for variance in how participants perceived the author’s attitude, the negative post was explicit enough to be classified on the negative end of the spectrum. It could not be interpreted as positive if the participant read the post attentively. Therefore, the five samples were removed where participants viewed the negative social media

content but responded with “somewhat positive” (4) or “positive” (5) when asked about the reader’s opinion.¹

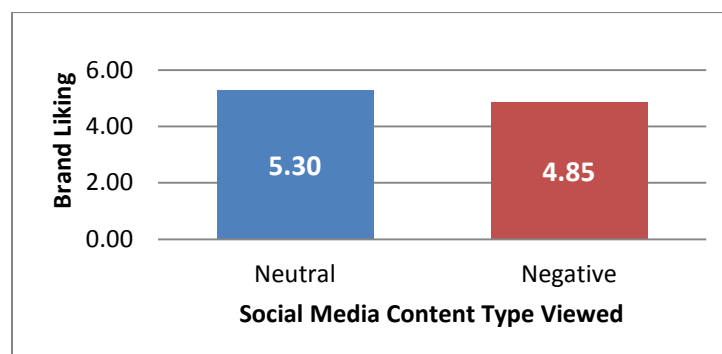
Figure 1: Responses to “How would you rate the author’s opinion of the Culligan brand based on his social media post?” (In negative content group)



4.2 Evaluation of Hypotheses

The results were analyzed by testing the significance of the two regression formulas, one relating to each hypothesis. This section will display the results from using regression analyses. Those who viewed the negative social media content rated the brand lower than those who viewed the neutral content. When asked, “Overall, how would you personally rate Culligan?” the mean response for those that viewed the neutral content was 5.3 on a seven-point scale, while the mean response was 4.83 for those that viewed the negative content.

Figure 2: Mean Brand Liking (All Users)



¹ The findings were not sensitive to the outliers. Results were significant with or without outliers included.

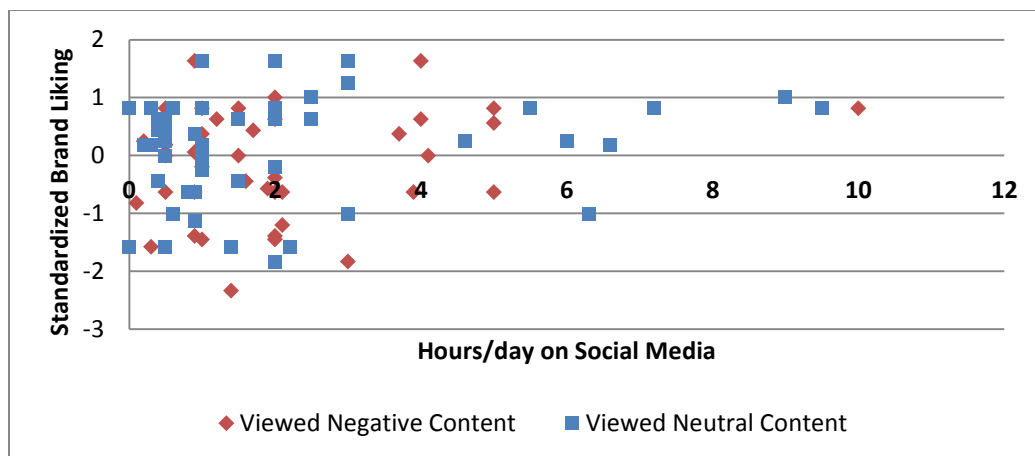
Responses from the treatment group varied slightly more than responses from the control group. The standard deviation of brand liking was 1.02 for participants who viewed the neutral content and 1.23 for participants who viewed the negative content. This variation should be considered when analyzing the results.

Table 1: Brand Liking Summary Statistics

Overall, how would you personally rate Culligan?		
Content Type	Mean Brand Liking	Standard Deviation
Neutral	5.30	1.02
Negative	4.85	1.23
All	5.10	1.13

Those who viewed negative content did not rate the brand significantly lower if they used social media more frequently. The chart below visually represents this finding that brand liking was similar across all usage frequencies. Blue squares indicate participants who viewed neutral content while red diamonds represent participants who viewed negative content. There is no strong positive correlation pattern to indicate that those who use social media more hours per day rated the brand lower after viewing negative content than those who use social media less hours per day.

Figure 3: Content Type vs. Social Media Usage



The results from each regression are displayed in the table below. The specific results will be discussed further in the next sections.

Table 2: Regression Results

Variable	Regression				
	1. Usage	2. Usage with Moderator	3. Usage with Controls	4. Product Experience	5. Product Experience with Controls
Intercept	4.823 (0.393)	4.632 (0.487)	3.868 (0.730)	5.057 (0.180)	4.617 (0.546)
Negative Content	-0.489** (0.238)	0.034 (0.817)	0.179 (0.770)	-0.480** (0.275)	-0.484** (0.275)
Social Media Usage	0.104 (0.078)	0.145 (0.100)	0.148* (0.097)		
Negative x Usage		-0.108 (0.162)	-0.147 (0.153)		
Product Experience			0.702** (0.251)	0.810** (0.328)	0.753** (0.337)
Experience x Negative				-0.029 (0.481)	-0.013 (0.478)
Gender			-0.132 (0.247)		-0.058 (0.243)
Age			0.024 (0.011)		0.022** (0.011)
Location			-0.198 (0.389)		-0.242 (0.389)
R ²	0.058	0.063	0.218	0.148	0.196

* p-value < 0.1

** p-value < 0.05

Hypothesis 1 predicted that brand liking would be lower when a consumer viewed negative social media content as compared to neutral social media content. The regression analysis for hypothesis 1 (see regression 1 in Figure 6) shows that brand liking is significantly lower after viewing negative social media content compared to neutral content. For this hypothesis, the “Negative View” variable needed to be less than zero (-0.489) and the p-value needed to be small (0.021). This indicates that consumer’s attitudes towards a brand can be influenced by user-generated posts about the brand on social media.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the level of brand liking after viewing negative social media content relative to neutral content would be lower for heavy users than for light users of social media. The regression analysis for hypothesis 2 does not show significant results (see regression 2 in Table 2). The regression results indicate that the coefficient is negative (-0.108), but the p-value (0.253) is not small enough to be significant. This research is unable to suggest any relationship between a consumer's social media usage and how influenced the consumer is by user-generated social media content.

Out of all 90 participants, 29 (32%) had used Culligan products before, and 61 (68%) had not. Additionally, only 14 participants (16%) had ever purchased a Culligan product before. When the regression controlled for prior usage or purchase of the brand, the regression as a whole was more significant as seen with a higher R-squared value in column 4, Table 2. Prior brand usage seems to play a role in brand liking, as indicated by a low p-value (0.014). The coefficient is positive, meaning that when the participant had used a Culligan product before, they were more likely to rate the brand higher than those who had not used Culligan products before.

Looking at the regression analysis, gender is not a significant factor in how participants rated the Culligan brand (p-value of 0.290, column 4, Table 2)). However, age plays a role in brand liking (p-value of 0.004). The age coefficient is positive, indicating that the higher the age, the more positively the participant rated the brand.

Location of the participant did not have a significant influence over how participants rated the brand. When brand liking was controlled for location, the regression only described about 6 percent of the variability around the mean of brand liking, and the location variable had an insignificant p-value (0.400). See column 4 of Table 2.

To expand on the analysis, this research examined the interaction between prior product experience and viewing negative content and the relationship with brand liking. While those who viewed negative content and had higher social media usage did not rate the brand any lower than those with low usage, product experience contributed significantly to how the participant ranked the brand overall. Research was furthered to discover if those who had prior experience with the product and viewed the negative content rated the brand significantly lower than those with no experience (the results for this approach can be found in the fourth and fifth regressions in Table 2). The results do not show that product experience acts as a “buffer” for brand liking. While product experience influenced how participants rated the brand overall, the negative effect on brand liking of viewing negative social media content relative to neutral content was not stronger for those with product experience than for those with no product experience.

5. Discussion

The results of this research suggest that consumers are influenced by brand content they see on social media that is created by other users. This has several implications for businesses and how they manage their brands. If consumers post negative comments about a brand, other consumers who read the content could change their attitude towards the brand, so companies need to actively monitor what people are saying about them on social media. Companies should take social media posts by consumers into account when making decisions about how to manage their brands. For example, if a company notices a trend of negative comments about them on social media, the company could take action to correct brand attitudes through their marketing or advertising. Companies should take a proactive approach through consistent monitoring to

notice negative trends as soon as possible in order to mitigate the risk of even more negative content being generated about an issue that could influence a larger network of consumers.

This research also suggests that companies could use social media to monitor attitudes about their brand in real time. If consumers are influenced by what others post on social media, companies could track current posts about their brand to warn them about potential brand image issues. If they see a negative trend of the content, companies could take action to improve their brand image such as through a creative advertising campaign. Other types of market research could take much longer to compile and would most likely be more expensive than analyzing social media trends. Monitoring a brand in real time would be especially useful for companies launching new brands or new products to see what people are saying about them.

Interestingly, the results of this research did not suggest that people who use social media more frequently are more influenced by user-generated brand content on social media than people who use social media less frequently. Therefore, social media usage does not seem to lead to greater trust in the content one reads. This could be because social media usage is so common for today's consumers. For example, in the sample for this study, 50% of participants use social media multiple times per day and only 3% do not use social media at all. Consumers are generally comfortable reading online reviews and opinions about brands which could contribute to why use frequency does not lead to greater trust as well. A survey from 2012 found that 69 percent of people online feel that online reviews have influenced their purchases ("8 in 10 Americans..." 2012).

A potential limitation of this study is that it only looks at how social media content from consumers affect consumer attitudes towards one brand, Culligan. It fails to compare the effect on more emotional, high involvement, or controversial brands where the results could have

varied. For example, consumers could be more influenced by user-generated content about emotional brands, such as Apple or Louis Vuitton. Other factors besides social media usage frequency could affect how influential user-generated brand content is to the consumer. Other factors worth researching could be the popularity of the brand, the type of product associated with the brand, or the reader's relationship to the content generator. This research was unable to address these factors as it only asked about the Culligan brand. Additional research could be conducted on which customer segments are most influenced by user-generated brand content on social media as well. This research focused on the effect of reading negative versus neutral content, but positive content may have a different degree of influence on consumer brand liking that would be worth researching.

6. Conclusion

This research contributes to the literature on social media marketing by showing that consumers' attitudes towards a brand are affected by content about the brand created by another user on social media. This study also addressed the gap in the literature on whether social media usage frequency affects the degree to which a consumer is influenced by user-generated content about a brand. Interestingly, this analysis did not yield significant results by usage which could be due to the large percentage of participants that use social media frequently. While this research only analyzed one brand, it still speaks to the power of word of mouth advertising through social media.

Companies need to be aware of what consumers are saying about their brands on social media platforms because their content can influence how others feel about the brand as well. Social media is both a tool and a risk for marketing brands. Marketers can create their own

content to share with consumers, and consumers can praise the brand with content about their positive feelings towards the brand or great experiences. However, negative content by disgruntled consumers can pose a risk to companies trying to maintain a specific brand image. This research proves just how risky consumers on social media can be to companies and their valuable brands.

References

- 8 in 10 Americans Agree That Online Reviews Influence Their Purchases. (2012, December 27). Retrieved from <http://www.marketingcharts.com/online/8-in-10-americans-agree-that-online-reviews-influence-their-purchases-25761/>
- A Strong Brand. (2005, January 1). Retrieved from <http://www.clarity-in-communication.com/getattachment/e69c0b29-934a-4b13-9f8f-d6a1d6274cfc/A-strong-brand.aspx>
- American Marketing Association Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ama.org/resources/Pages/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B>
- eMarketer. (2013). Advertisers boost social ad budgets in 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Advertisers-Boost-Social-Ad-Budgets-2013/1009688>.
- Foux, G. (2006, May 8). Consumer-generated media: Get your customers involved. *Brand Strategy*, 38-39
- Hill, K. (2012, January 24). #McDStories: When A Hashtag Becomes A Bashtag. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kashmirhill/2012/01/24/mcdstories-when-a-hashtag-becomes-a-bashtag/>
- Kamal, S., Chu, S., & Pedram, M. (2013). Materialism, Attitudes, and Social Media Usage and Their Impact on Purchase Intention of Luxury Fashion Goods Among American and Arab Young Generations. *Journal Of Interactive Advertising*, 13(1), 27-40. doi:10.1080/15252019.2013.768052
- Kaplan, A.M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Li, C., & Bernoff, J. (2008). Groundswell. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Michaelidou, N., Siamagka, N. T., & Christodoulides, G. (2011). Usage, barriers and measurement of social media marketing: An exploratory investigation of small and medium b2b brands. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(7), 1153-1159. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/science/article/pii/S0019850111001374>
- Number of worldwide social network users 2010-2018 | Statistic. (2015, January 1). Retrieved from <http://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>

- Rishika, R., Kumar, A., Janakiraman, R., & Bezawada, R. (2013). The Effect of Customers' Social Media Participation on Customer Visit Frequency and Profitability: An Empirical Investigation. *Information Systems Research*, 24(1), 108-127. doi:10.1287/isre.1120.0460
- Stelzner, M. (2013, May). *2013 social media marketing industry report: How marketers are using social media to grow their businesses*. Retrieved from http://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/140708233?access_key=key-2768pmmuw1y7l7z9jvw&allow_share=false&show_recommendations=false
- Structuring a social media team. (2012, January 1). Retrieved from http://web.ragan.com/raganforms/Structuring_A_Social_Media_Team.pdf
- Trusov, M., Bucklin, R., & Pauwels, K. (2009). Effects of word-of-mouth versus traditional marketing: Findings from an internet social networking site. *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 90-102.
- Verma, H. (2006). *Brand management: Text and cases* (2nd ed., pp. 111-115). New Delhi: Excel Books.
- Villanueva, J., Yoo, S., & Hanssens, D. (2008). The Impact Of Marketing-Induced Versus Word-of-Mouth Customer Acquisition On Customer Equity Growth. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 48-59. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/stable/30162520?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
- Walsh, P., Clavio, G., Lovell, M. D., & Blaszkowski, M. (2013). Differences in Event Brand Personality Between Social Media Users and Non- Users. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 22(4), 214-223.
- Yannopoulou, N., Koronis, E., & Elliott, R. (2011). Media amplification of a brand crisis and its affect on brand trust. *Journal Of Marketing Management*, 27(5/6), 530-546. doi:10.1080/0267257X.2010.498141

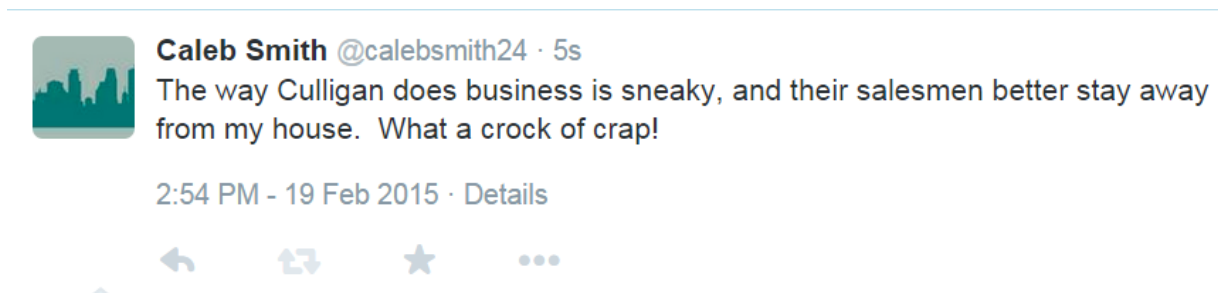
Appendix

1. Manipulation Images


Neutral Image



Negative Image



2. Survey



CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

You are invited to be in a research study about brands. You are eligible for this survey if you are at least 18 years of age or older and speak and read English. I ask that you read this form before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Emily Kohlmann, a student at the Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, under the advisement of Colleen Manchester, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Work and Organizations, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to answer questions about a specific brand, read a short paragraph about the brand, and answer several follow-up questions. In addition, you will complete demographic questions.

The study will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

In order to receive compensation however, you must complete the survey.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Emily Kohlmann with assistance from Colleen Manchester. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at kohl0180@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D628 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

Would you like to continue with the survey?

☐ Yes, I am at least 18 years old and speak English, and I agree to participate in this survey

☐ No, I would not like to participate at this time

>>

Please read this information about Culligan before continuing with the survey.

Culligan is an international water treatment products company. Culligan specializes in water softeners, water filtration systems and bottled water for residential and office applications. The company was founded in 1936 and is headquartered in Rosemont, Illinois.

They are often recognized by their advertisement slogan for their bottled water service. The ad features a housewife loudly saying the slogan "Hey, Culligan Man" in response to being told to "call your Culligan man."

The company's vision statement is "to provide a better quality of life for our communities by improving water quality."



What comes to mind when you think of the Culligan brand?

In general, how do you feel about Culligan?

>>

You are scrolling through a social media site and come across this post. You pause and take 15 seconds to read the post.



Caleb Smith @calebsmith24 · 5s

The way Culligan does business is sneaky, and their salesmen better stay away from my house. What a crock of crap!

2:54 PM · 19 Feb 2015 · Details



>>

You are scrolling through a social media site and come across this post. You pause and take 15 seconds to look at the post.



Caleb Smith @calebsmith24 · Jan 29



11:41 AM · 29 Jan 2015 · Details



Collapse

>>

Thinking about the post you just viewed, how would you rate the author's opinion of Culligan based on his social media post?

Negative



Somewhat Negative



Neutral



Somewhat Positive



Positive



>>

Overall, how would you personally rate Culligan?

Very Poor



Poor



Somewhat Poor



Neither poor nor excellent



Fair



Good



Excellent



On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend Culligan to a friend or colleague?

Not at all likely

0



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



Extremely likely

On a scale from 0-10, with 10 being your ideal water, how would you rate Culligan?

0



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



>>

Have you ever used a Culligan product before?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Have you ever purchased a Culligan product before?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Would you consider Culligan your favorite water brand?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

>>

How many days per week do you use social media?

0 days



1-2 days



3-4 days



5-6 days



Once per day




Multiple times per day



In a typical day, about how much time did you spend on social media websites?

Hours

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
										

>>

Do you ever post about your experience with a brand on social media?

Never



Rarely



Sometimes



Often



All of the Time



>>

What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

What is your age?

Please select where you are taking this survey from.

- ☐ Domestic (in the United States)
☐ International

>>

Thank you for completing the survey. In Amazon Mechanical Turk, you will be prompted to enter a code to prove that you took this survey. In order to receive credit for completing this survey, please enter the following code where it says "Provide the survey code here" on the task in Turk:

BaHtEk15

>>

3. Distribution of Sample Age

